

'Save the Dells' calls developer's latest annexation application 'insufficient'

By The Daily Courier

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"Save the Dells," the local Granite Dells advocacy organization, has deemed the revised annexation application for property in the Granite Dells as "insufficient to protect areas of crucial public concern."

The organization released a statement this week in response to the Friday, April 12, finalization by Arizona Eco Development of its annexation application with the City of Prescott.

AED's proposal seeks annexation into Prescott city limits of 866 acres of land in its southern section near the Point of Rocks, and 1,656 acres in the northern section near the Prescott Airport.

While Save the Dells maintains that AED's revised map makes exact home calculations and locations difficult to determine, it reports that a team of four Save the Dells conservation experts spent two days analyzing the maps to arrive at estimated impacts.

"Based on comparison between the August 2018 and April 2019 maps, AED has only reduced the total number of homes in the entire 866-acre south annexation by a mere 25 units, from 1,185 homes down to 1,160 homes," the press release states.

It adds that within the south annexation area, AED has relocated about 65 homes slightly to the north.

"That is nowhere near the 300 homes that AED's CEO Jason Gisi claimed to have moved north in order to preserve the Point of Rocks area," the release states.

Save the Dells Chairman Amber Fields added, "AED has offered up a scant 2% reduction in homes from their earlier application, and they're claiming they moved 300 houses north, which we have found no evidence of. I'm astonished that negotiations with the City only got us this far."

Fields maintains that AED "could accomplish meaningful open space protection if they were sincere about 'relocating 300 houses north.' That's what it will take to meet our 500-acre goal."

According to Save the Dells' analysis, AED's revised proposal places about 300 homes and a 200-room resort complex within the 500-acre area Save the Dells has proposed as a public park.

"With this proposal, AED has rejected the chance to provide a common-sense proposal that most citizens could support," the news release states.

By comparing the two maps available to the public, Save the Dells says, "It's evident that AED wants to build about 50 homes directly in the centerline of No-Name Creek," and that the plans would place "as many as 100 homes in floodplains, riparian woodlands, and wet meadows visible from the Peavine Trail."

Save the Dells Conservation Director Joe Trudeau says the AED plan "would render useless a critical wildlife corridor and destroy views from the Peavine National Recreation Trail."

The press release adds that while AED's 244 acres of proposed open space is clustered mostly around Point of Rocks, "the eastern flank of that feature, including the area surrounding the magnificent Easter Peak, is not identified as open space despite its prominence in the heart of the Dells. Instead, this area is contained within a proposed private resort."

Fields adds that the resort's access roads "show no regard at all for wildlife habitat, quiet recreation, pedestrian safety, and dark night skies."

Save the Dells maintains that by shifting the proposed housing and resort complex farther to the north, AED could still "profit substantially while protecting the 500-acre area which is considered the heart of the Dells."

With AED's final application last week, the City of Prescott announced that the submittal was "deemed complete" by city staff.

That set off a four- to five-week staff review, after which AED's plans will go to the Prescott Planning and Zoning Commission for public review. Dates have yet to be determined.